

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-02 SY-05 USSS-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05
OPR-02 A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 SCS-06 CA-01 /080 W
-----015467 211902Z /41

O R 211810Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7190
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: PINS, PINT, NU
SUBJECT: ROCKETS LAUNCHED FROM HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL, MANAGUA

1. TO CONFIRM TELEPHONIC REPORTS TO STATE OPCNTR DURING
COURSE OF EVENING OF JULY 20, FROM FACTS AVAILABLE IT APPEARS
THAT UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS FIRED TWO ROCKETS FROM A ROOM ON THE
SEVENTH FLOOR OF MANAGUA HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL TOWARD THE NEEARBY
GUARDIA NACIONAL HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX AT ABOUT 4 P.M. ON JULY 20.
GN TROOPS IN THE VICINITY FIRED BACK AT SUSPECTED TARGETS ON AND
AROUND THE HOTEL BUILDING. NO DEATHS OR INJURIES WERE REPORTED
INITIALLY, BUT EMB HAS JUST LEARNED THAT SON OF RESPECTED CON-
SERVATIVE LEADER ALVAREZ MONTALVAN WAS SHOT AND KILLED BY GN;
FACTS UNCLEAR. NICARAGUAN AUTHORITIES PURSUING PERSONS SUSPECTED
OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE INCIDENT FIRED NUMEROUS ROUNDS INTO AND
AROUND THE NEARBY CABRERA MOVIE THEATER; NO INJURIES HAVE BEEN
REPORTED RESULTING FROM THIS INCIDENT. US CONSUL VISITED INTER-
CONTINENTAL HOTEL IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING INCIDENT AND WAS ASSURED
BY HOTEL MANAGEMENT AND AMCITS ON THE SCENE THAT ALL WERE ACCOUNTED
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FOR AND APPARENTLY SAFE FROM HARM. AN AMICIT NEWSMAN WAS TAKEN
INTO CUSTODY, QUESTIONED, AND LATER RELEASED.

2. BASED ON LOCAL RADIO NEWS REPORTS, NOVEDADES COVERAGE, FIRST-
HAND REPORTS FROM USG PERSONNEL ON THE SCENE AND A TELEPHONE CALL
TO THE AMBASSADOR FROM PRESIDENT SOMOZA FOLLOWING THE EVENT, IT
APPEARS THAT TWO 3.5" ROCKETS WERE FIRED POSSIBLY BY TIME DELAY

FUSE FROM ROOM 716 ON THE SEVENTH FLOOR OF THE HOTEL TOWARD GUARDIA NACIONAL HEADQUARTERS SOME FEW HUNDRED YARDS AWAY. ONE ROUND EXPLODED ON THE HEADQUARTERS GROUNDS DOING NO SERIOUS DAMAGE AND CAUSING NO INJURIES. THE SECOND ROUND, APPARENTLY MALFUNCTIONING, FELL INTO HEADQUARTERS PARKING LOT AND DID NOT DEMONATE. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER ANY OTHER WEAPONS WERE FIRED FROM THE HOTEL BUT GN TROOPS IN THE VICINITY LET LOOSE A NUMBER OF ROUNDS WHICH HAVE LEFT THE FRONT AND SIDES OF THE HOTEL BUILDING SEVERLY SCARRED AND WHICH BROKE A NUMBER OF WINDOWS IN THE HOTEL'S MAIN FACADE. AUTHORITIES ARRIVED ON THE SCENE WITHIN MINUTES, CORDONED OFF THE AREA IN THE VICINITY OF THE HEADQUARTERS AND ENGAGED IN A SEARCH FOR PERPETRATORS OF THE INCIDENT. DURING THAT SEARCH MORE ROUNDS WERE FIRED WITH WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN AN EXCHANGE OCCURING IN THE VICINITY OF THE CABRERA MOVIE THEATER.

3. POLICE INITIATED AN INVESTIGATION AT THE HOTEL AND TOOK THE PASSPORTS OF ALL GUESTS AND PERSONS ON THE HOTEL PREMISES. PASSPORTS WERE HELD FOR UP TO 3 OR 4 HOURS AND THEN, EMBASSY IS ADVISED, THEY WERE RETURNED TO THE OWNERS.

4. A NUMBER OF USG EMPLOYEES WERE REGISTERED AT THE HOTEL, AMONG THEM THE DIRECTOR OF AID'S ROCAP MISSION AND STATE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES RECENTLY ARRIVED AT THE EMBASSY. CONSUL VISITED THE HOTEL TO VERIFY THAT ALL AMCITS WERE SAFE AND WAS SO ASSURED BY HOTEL MANAGEMENT AND OTHERS ON THE SCENE.

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5. US CITIZEN PERRY KRETZ, EMPLOYED BY STERN MAGAZINE, AS A PHOTOGRAPHER, WAS PICKED UP FROM HOTEL AND BROUGHT IN FOR QUESTIONING BY GUARDIA NACIONAL AND LATER RELEASED AND DRIVEN BACK TO HOTEL. KRETZ OCCUPIED ROOM ON SIXTH FLOOR AND, FRIGHTENED BY EXPLOSIONS, RAN DOWN HOTEL STAIRWAY WITH HIS PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT. HE SAID HOTEL MAID HAD INTERPRETED HIS ACTIONS AS SUSPICIOUS AND HAD REPORTED HIM TO THE GUARDIA, WHICH IS HOLDING HIS EQUIPMENT FOR THE MOMENT, PRESUMABLY FOR EXAMINATION. AS SOON AS HIS EQUIPMENT IS RELEASED TO HIM KRETZ PLANS TO DEPART NICARAGUA.

6. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR LAUNCHING THE ROCKETS ALSO EXPLODED ONE OR TWO OTHER DEVICES IN THE HOTEL TO MASK THEIR ESCAPE. THERE IS ALSO A REPORT THAT THE PERSONS WHO RENTED ROOM 716 WERE A MAN AND WOMAN WITH MANY PIECES OF LUGGAGE.

7. AT ABOUT 9:00 A.M. LOCAL ON JULY 21, AMBASSADOR WAS CALLED BY (AUTENTICO) CONSERVATIVE LEADER EMILIO ALVAREZ MONTALVAN, A RESPECTED OPPOSITIONIST, WHO ASKED IF EMBASSY COULD HELP HIM LOCATE HIS SON WHO HAD NOT SHOWN UP TO MEET HIM EVENING OF JULY 20 AS AGREED. SON IS A COLLEGE STUDENT IN US, HOME ON VACATION. EMB QUERIED GN CONTACT WHO CALLED BACK TO REPORT THT ALVAREZ MONTALVAN'S SON HAD BEEN SHOT AND KILLED BY GN AFTERNOON OF JULY

20, IN VICINITY OF INTER-CONTINENTAL, APPARENTLY IN IMMEDIATE
AFTERMATH OF ROCKET ATTACK. FIRST REPORT IS THAT YOUNG MAN GOT
OUT OF HIS CAR AND RAN AND THAT GN REACTING BY SHOOTING. IT IS
NOT KNOWN, OF COURSE, WHETHER THE YOUTH WAS OR WAS NOT
INVOLVED IN ROCKET ATTACK. ALVAREZ MONTALVAN IS HIGHLY RESPECTED
IN VIRTUALLY ALL SECTORS, HAS CONSISTENTLY HEWED TO NON-VIOLENT
LINE, AND THIS TRAGIC INCIDENT MAY HAVE AMPLIFIED REPERCUSSIONS
IN CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS.
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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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